

PRESS RELEASE

The Cleveland Museum of Art

Public Relations / 11150 East Blvd. / Cleveland, Ohio 44106 / 216 421-7340

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FOR RELEASE ON RECEIPT

CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART DISPLAYS UNIQUE COLLECTION OF ANCIENT ANIMAL FIGURES

Leo Mildenberg, a director of the Bank Leu in Zurich, Switzerland, and one of the world's foremost authorities on ancient coins, has over the past thirty years assembled an extraordinary collection of animal figures from ancient Near Eastern, Egyptian and classical cultures. Approximately 250 works from his collection will be exhibited to the public for the first time in a special exhibition on view at The Cleveland Museum of Art from October 21 through November 29, 1981.

Animals in Ancient Art from the Leo Mildenberg Collection consists of miniature animal figures of bronze, gold, terra cotta, and glass; small earthenware vessels shaped like or decorated with animals; and a variety of other works for ritual, decorative, or practical use. Included are some rare and unique works and some of the finest known examples of ancient animal sculpture. Almost all of these objects have been studied and published for the first time in preparation for this exhibition.

Organized by Arielle P. Kozloff, associate curator of ancient art at The Cleveland Museum of Art, the exhibition will travel, following its Cleveland showing, to the Indiana University Art Museum, The Toledo Museum of Art, The J. Paul Getty Museum, and the University Art Museum of the University of California at Berkeley.

The animals in the Mildenberg collection testify to the keen powers of observation and to the skill and sensitivity of the ancient craftsmen who made them. They also provide insights into the attitudes of ancient cultures toward

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animals and illustrate, as Ms. Kozloff explains in the exhibition's catalog, how "each culture developed its own individual way of seeing an animal's natural characteristics and its personality."

Many of the objects in the exhibition, for example, reflect ancient beliefs in the supernatural powers of animals. Some were made as votive offerings or amulets to ward off evil or obtain special benefits for their wearers. Several, like Egyptian bronze figures of a bull, a cat, and a baboon, represented deities. A large number of the animal figures were incorporated in jewelry or decorated clothing, vessels, and furniture. Animal sculptures also served as lamps, containers for cosmetics and perfumes, architectural ornaments, and children's toys.

The oldest works in the exhibition are a group of Anatolian animal sculptures of the late 4th millennium B.C. These and a Sumerian limestone leopard dating from approximately 3200 B.C. represent the earliest stages of Near Eastern stone sculpture in the round.

Among other noteworthy objects from the Near East is a bronze bull from the Hattian culture, late 3rd millennium B.C. Possibly a representation of that culture's weather god, the bull is a masterful blend of naturalistic art and geometric form. Its body is dominated by large lyre-shaped horns, which according to beliefs of the time, supported the universe on its tips. Two lion bracteates (ornaments cut from thin gold sheets and sewn on royal garments) from Persia's Achaemenid Dynasty (559-338 B.C.) reflect the wealth and power of that great empire.

Almost all the animals from Egypt had symbolic or religious functions. A hippopotamus of turquoise-blue faience dating from Dynasty XI or XII (2040-1783 B.C.), a type found only in Middle Kingdom tombs, represented a spirit of the underworld. Beautifully modeled and superbly decorated with drawings of Nile flora and fauna, it is among the best examples of its type in the world.

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The traditional defender of Egyptian kings and divinities, a rearing cobra (uraeus) of silver with inlaid glass eyes, dates to Dynasty XIX (1307-1196 B.C.) and probably adorned the head of a large sculpture. Originally decorated with gold leaf and inlaid with glass and semiprecious stones (traces remain), this uraeus is the only one of its kind known. A striding Apis bull, the sacred bull of the city of Memphis, is bronze with silver eyes; probably from Dynasty XXVI (664-525 B.C.), it ranks in sculptural quality and incised decoration among the finest of such figures.

In the classical world, animals had symbolic and religious roles and also served as companions and sources of pleasure and amusement. Lions were symbols of royal power and guardian figures in the Near East and Egypt; in the classical world they served more varied functions. One of the most beautiful lions adorns an Etruscan gold granulated plaque of the 7th century B.C. The work demonstrates the Etruscans' fascination with exotic Oriental motifs and is an outstanding example of the rich granulation for which they were famous.

Earthenware vases painted with animals or shaped like animals are numerous. Most appealing are a group of small animal-shaped vases used to hold perfumes and precious ointments, particularly one shaped like a truncated monkey with comic expression, probably of East Greek or Rhodian origin and dating from the early 6th century B.C. Another unusual earthenware vase is a Greek black-figured amphora of the late 6th century B.C. painted with a unique combination of marine creatures.

The classical artist's genius for realistic sculpture is illustrated in a number of sensitively modeled animals, including a spirited Greek terracotta horse of the late 4th or 3rd century B.C., a trio of tiny Roman bronze mice of the 1st to 3rd centuries, and a resting bronze hound of Roman workmanship from the 2nd or 3rd century.

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Every work in the exhibition is illustrated in the 236-page catalog, which contains articles and entries by nine scholars and over 300 black and white photographs and 22 color plates. It can be purchased from the Museum's Sales Desk for \$15.00. Perry Grin's Travels, a children's story inspired by some of the animal figures in the exhibition, written by Arielle Kozloff and illustrated by Christine E. Edwards of the Museum's Department of Ancient Art, is also available at the Sales Desk for \$1.00.

The Cleveland showing of this exhibition is assisted by a grant from the Ohio Arts Council. A generous grant from the Bank Leu provided most of the funds for the production of the catalog.

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LEO MILDENBERG - Biographical Sketch

Leo Mildenberg is a director and senior vice president of the oldest bank in Switzerland, the Bank Leu, in Zurich, founded in 1755. Founder and director of the Bank Leu's Numismatic Department, he is responsible for the acquisition and cataloging of coins and for the bank's auctions of rare and important coins. Dr. Mildenberg is an authority on ancient coins and the foremost scholar of Jewish coins of the Bar Kokhba period--a brief period of Jewish revolt against Roman rule (132-135).

Dr. Mildenberg edited the Swiss Numismatic Review from 1966 to 1980 and is an honorary member of the Swiss Numismatic Society and the International Association of Professional Numismatists. He has lectured at the Royal Numismatic Society in London, the American Numismatic Society in New York, at Harvard, the University of Southern California, Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and several European universities. In 1973 he received the Kadman prize of the Israel Numismatic Society for his scholarship in the area of Jewish coins.

Born in Kassel, near Frankfurt, Germany, on February 14, 1913, Leo Mildenberg studied at universities in Frankfurt, Leipzig, and Dorpat, specializing in ancient history and Semitic languages, in addition to numismatics.

His interest in ancient history and his appreciation for small, precisely made objects is seen in his collection of ancient animal figures, which he began which he came to the Bank Leu in 1949. At first he bought lions, which carry not only his name but the name of the Bank ("leu" is lion in German). His collection has grown to embrace a wide variety of animals, almost all in peaceful, rather than ferocious poses, reflecting their owner, who describes himself as a very peaceful man.

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ANIMALS IN ANCIENT ART FROM THE LEO MILDENBERG COLLECTION

PROGRAMS ACCOMPANYING THE EXHIBITION

Gallery Talks: 1:30 p.m. daily from October 21 through 27 (excepting Monday).
Presented in the exhibition by instructors in the Museum's Department of Art History and Education.

Lectures: Sunday, October 25, 3:30 p.m.
(In the Recital Hall) Dorothy Kent Hill, former curator of Greek and Roman art at The Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, will speak on "Animals in the Classical World."

Sunday, November 22, 3:30 p.m.
Robert S. Bianchi, associate curator of Egyptian and classical art at The Brooklyn Museum, will speak on "Foreigner, Fauna, and Pharaoh: Animal Cults in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt."

"Animals in Art," a series of free lectures offered by the Department of Art History and Education and open to the public, will be presented on six consecutive Tuesdays, beginning October 27 at 1:30 p.m., and repeated the following Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m.

Supporting Exhibition: A Cleveland Bestiary - October 14 through December 9
Classroom Level Gallery

An exhibition of works depicting animals from the Cleveland Museum's collections examines aspects of man's relationship with, and treatment of, the animal in art.

Audio-Visual Programs: Slide-tapes related to Animals in Ancient Art and A Cleveland Bestiary will be shown in the Museum's audio-visual center during these exhibitions. "Perry Grin's Travels," a slide-tape made especially for children visiting the exhibitions, will also run continuously.

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FACT SHEET

Exhibition: Animals in Ancient Art from the Leo Mildenberg Collection

Dates: October 21 through November 29, 1981

Content: The exhibition consists of approximately 250 works of art depicting animals, from ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean cultures, selected from the private collection of Dr. Leo Mildenberg, a director of the Bank Leu in Zurich, Switzerland, and one of the world's foremost authorities on ancient coins.

In the exhibition are miniature animal figures of bronze, gold, terra cotta, and glass; small earthenware vessels shaped like animals or decorated with animal designs; and a variety of other works for ritual, decorative, or practical use.

Divided into three sections--Near Eastern, Egyptian, and Classical--the objects range in date from a group of Anatolian animal sculptures of the late 4th millennium B.C. to a Persian glass lion made in the 11th or 12th century.

Included are some rare and unique works and some of the finest examples of ancient animal sculpture known.

Significance: Dr. Mildenberg's collection has never before been exhibited to the public. Almost all of the objects have been researched and published for the first time in preparation for this exhibition.

Besides exhibiting the artistry of ancient craftsmen, the collection documents the role of animals in ancient cultures.

Many of the small figures in the exhibition reflect ancient beliefs in the supernatural powers of animals. Some were made as votive offerings or amulets to ward off evil or obtain special benefits for their wearers. Several, like Egyptian bronze figures of a bull, a cat, and a baboon, represented deities.

A large number of the animal figures were incorporated in jewelry or decorated clothing, vessels, and furniture. Animal sculptures also served as lamps, containers for perfumes and precious oils, architectural ornaments, and children's toys.

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animals in ancient art

Important Works:

Near Eastern

A Sumerian limestone leopard with inlay of Egyptian blue dating from approximately 3200 B.C. represents the earliest stages of Near Eastern stone sculpture in the round.

A bronze bull from the Hattian culture, late 3rd millennium B.C., topped a ritual standard and is a masterful blend of naturalistic art and geometric form.

An Achaemenian bracteate (ornament cut from a thin gold sheet and sewn on a royal garment) dates from the early 5th century B.C. and is stamped with a unique design of roaring lions' heads positioned back to back.

Egyptian

A hippopotamus of turquoise-blue faience dating from Dynasty XI or XII (2040-1783 B.C.), beautifully modeled and superbly decorated with drawings of Nile flora and fauna, is among the best examples of its type in the world.

A rearing cobra (uraeus) of silver with inlaid glass eyes dates to Dynasty XIX (1307-1196 B.C.) and probably adorned the head of a large sculpture. Originally decorated with gold leaf and inlaid with glass and semiprecious stones (traces remain), this uraeus is the only one of its kind known.

A bronze striding Apis bull with silver eyes, probably from Dynasty XXVI (664-525 B.C.), in sculptural quality and incised decoration ranks among the finest of such figures.

Classical

An Etruscan gold plaque, ca. 650-600 B.C., decorated with a lion and other designs in granulated gold, is an outstanding example of the rich granulation for which the Etruscans were famous.

An earthenware vase shaped and painted to represent a truncated monkey with a comic expression, of East Greek or Rhodian origin, early 6th century B.C., is a particularly fine example of an aryballos, a small vase used to hold perfumes and precious ointments. This appealing work is the central figure in a children's story, "Perry Grin's Travels," available as a booklet and slide-tape for children visiting the exhibition.

A unique Greek earthenware black-figured amphora of the late 6th century B.C. is painted with an unusual combination of marine creatures.

The classical artist's genius for realistic sculpture is illustrated in a number of sensitively modeled animals, including a spirited Greek terra-cotta horse of the late 4th or 3rd century B.C. and a resting bronze hound of Roman workmanship from the 2nd or 3rd century A.D.

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animals in ancient art

- Organization and Support: The exhibition was organized by Arielle P. Kozloff, associate curator of ancient art at The Cleveland Museum of Art. Its Cleveland showing is assisted by a grant from the Ohio Arts Council. A grant from Bank Leu, Zurich, Switzerland, provided most of the funds for the production of the exhibition catalogue.
- Catalogue: The 236-page catalogue, with articles and entries by nine scholars, contains over 300 black and white photographs and 22 color plates.
- Gallery Talks: Gallery talks on the exhibition will be given by instructors in the Museum's Department of Art History and Education at 1:30 p.m. daily from October 21 through 27 (excepting Monday).
- Lectures: Dorothy Kent Hill, former curator of Greek and Roman art at The Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, will speak on "Animals in the Classical World" on Sunday, October 25, at 3:30 p.m. in the Museum's Recital Hall.
- Robert S. Bianchi, associate curator of Egyptian and classical art at The Brooklyn Museum, will speak on "Foreigner, Fauna, and Pharaoh: Animal Cults in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt," on Sunday, November 22, at 3:30 p.m. in the Recital Hall.
- "Animals in Art," a series of free lectures offered by the Museum's Department of Art History and Education and open to the public, will be presented on six consecutive Tuesdays, beginning October 27 at 1:30 p.m., repeating the following Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m., in the Recital Hall.
- Other Educational Activities: A Cleveland Bestiary, an exhibition of works depicting animals from The Cleveland Museum of Art's collections, will be on view in the classroom level gallery from October 14 through December 9.
- During the exhibition a variety of slide-tapes related to Animals in Ancient Art will be shown in the Museum's audio-visual center. "Perry Grin's Travels," a slide-tape made especially for children visiting the exhibition, will be shown daily.
- Itinerary: Following its Cleveland showing, the exhibition will travel to the Indiana University Art Museum, The Toledo Museum of Art, The J. Paul Getty Museum, and the University Art Museum of the University of California at Berkeley.

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